

# Research Note

***Working-time, income and social inclusion*** by Terry Ward and H el ene Calers  
with contributions from the Health network

## Abstract:

The average hours worked by those in employment has tended to decline over the long-term. In recent times, however, this is largely a result of an increased proportion of those employed, women in particular, working part-time and there has been little if any decline in the hours worked by most individuals. Indeed, the average hours worked by those in full-time jobs – who still account for around 80% of those in employment in the EU – have either remained the same or increased slightly over the past decade or two in most countries. People generally, therefore, have not experienced any significant reduction in the amount of time they spend in work, but there has been a marked increase in EU15 countries at least in the proportion of working-age population in employment, due to many more women having jobs.

Accordingly, the main tendency in respect of working time in EU15 countries – though not in most of the new Member States where there has been a sharp reduction in employment rates with the transition away from a situation where everyone of working-age was expected to work and had a guaranteed job – has been a reallocation of work from men to women. This is most marked in couple households where in the majority cases both partners are now in employment, irrespective of whether or not they have children. The result is that more people, again women especially, are facing the problem of reconciling the pursuit of a working career with their family responsibilities.

Time use surveys tend to support the above conclusions. Income levels seem to have relatively little effect on the amount of time men spend in paid employment but seem to influence whether women who have a job tend to work part-time or full-time. In higher income Member States, therefore, men spend almost as much time working as in lower income ones but women spend significantly less. Although this enables them to spend a little more time pursuing leisure activities, especially socialising, the larger part of the reduction in time spent working goes to personal care and travelling, mainly for non-leisure reasons, to shop and to transport children.

While there is not much evidence of people wanting to work less as their income increases, it is still the case that their ability to determine how long they work, when they work and whether they work part-time or full-time is very limited in most countries.

*This Research Note has been produced for the European Commission by Terry Ward and H el ene Calers (Applica) from the Social Inclusion network of the European Observatory on the Social Situation and Demography with contributions from the Health network. The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the European Commission.*

# Working-time, income and social inclusion<sup>1</sup>

## 1. The issues

The issue of working time and the way that people divide their days between the job that they do and other activities and responsibilities has attracted an increasing amount of interest among both policy-makers and researchers. This has been prompted by a number of developments, not least by technological advance and the increase in automation, in the home as well as the work place, and the possibility that this might reduce the need for people to work and the time spent doing so; by the growth in income levels which could potentially increase the attractiveness of leisure in relation to work – or, more accurately, in relation to the goods and services that income from working buys – and by the increased tendency for women to pursue a working career, which has focused more attention on their ability to reconcile paid employment with their caring and family responsibilities.

This growing interest has been accompanied by the increasing availability of data on time use, on how long people tend to spend on different activities and on the extent to which this varies between men and women as well as between countries.

Nevertheless, there remains a good deal of uncertainty about a number of important issues in this area. In particular, while it is undoubtedly the case that the average hours worked by those in employment have tended to decline over time, especially over the very long-term, the extent of the reduction and its division across society are less clear-cut. It is equally unclear, partly because of a lack of time series data, how people have tended to use the time they have gained by working fewer hours – whether, for example, they enjoy more leisure time than used to be the case and what they specifically do in this time – and how far it is a force for greater social inclusion or alternatively a further factor widening disparities within society.

While there remains a lack of data on certain important aspects of time use, those available provide a valuable insight into a number of issues relating to working time and the trade-off between work and leisure, in particular:

- the extent of the reduction in the hours spent in paid employment over recent years, how far this represents a continuing trend and the division of any reduction across society, especially between men and women and those with different levels of income;
- the implications of the increased tendency for women to take up paid employment and pursue working careers for the division of work within households, including unpaid as well as paid work;
- how far there is evidence of a general desire to reduce the amount of time spent working in order to enjoy more leisure time as people become better off and how this is likely to affect the distribution of income within society;
- how the time gained by working fewer hours in paid employment is spent and how far it contributes to social inclusion.

## 2. The facts

While the average hours worked by those in employment have unquestionably declined over time, it does not necessarily follow from this that people generally now spend less time in paid work than previously. Here a distinction needs to be made between the new Member States – or, more specifically, the 8 countries which began the transition from centrally planned to market economies 15 or so years ago – and three of the four candidate countries, on the one hand, and the rest of the EU, on the other. In the former countries, employment is lower now than in the past when everyone of working age was expected to have a job. In the latter – the EU15 countries, in particular – the number in employment has tended to rise over recent decades as more women have begun to pursue working careers. In overall terms, therefore, the total hours worked have increased in the EU15 countries rather than fallen as more people have paid jobs than was previously the case, whereas they have

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fallen in the new Member States, though not necessarily in line with the wishes of the men and women no longer in employment. The tendency in the EU15 for total hours worked to increase is also apparent in the US (Schor 1993 and Jacobs and Gerson 2004).

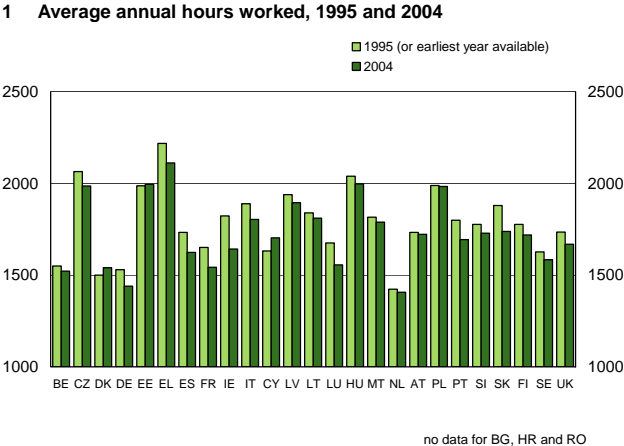
This growth of employment in the EU15 countries has been accompanied by a reduction in the average hours which those employed work. But this is largely the result of many of the women entering the labour force taking up part-time rather than full-time jobs. Indeed, there is little evidence of any general tendency across the EU for the hours worked by men and women in full-time employment to decline over the past 10-20 years, though there are a few Member States where this has occurred. There are equally signs of some reduction in working time in the new Member States, where hours worked are generally much higher than in other parts of the EU.

These facts can be documented on the basis of data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), in particular, which give an indication of developments in working hours over time.

**Average hours worked**

**Annual working hours**

New estimates of annual hours worked (made by Eurostat as part of the national accounts) show that average working time over the year has declined in the EU over the past decade. Over the EU15 as whole, average annual hours worked by those in employment fell by 0.5% a year between 1995 and 2004 and a similar decline seems to have occurred in the new Member States for which data are available (Figure 1). This means that the people with jobs worked an average of 8-9 hours less each year over this period, or just over one working day less, equivalent to an overall reduction over the 9 years of almost two weeks.



The decline is fairly general across countries. With the exception of Denmark, all EU15 Member States experienced a reduction over this period and in most cases one which was similar in size to the EU average and similar in the later years to that in the earlier ones. Moreover, except for Estonia and Cyprus, there was a decline in all of the new Member States over the years for which there are data.

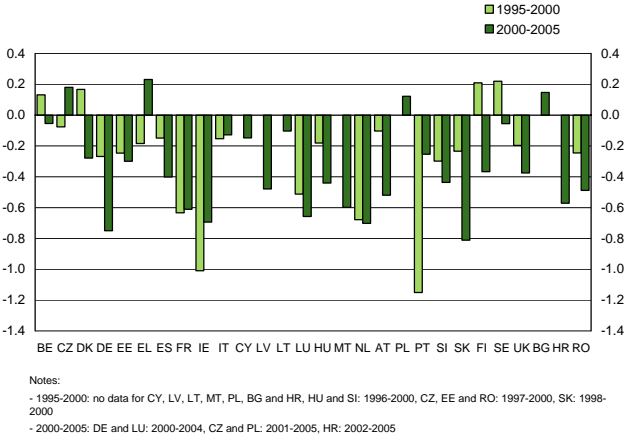
Nevertheless, despite this decline, annual hours worked remain universally much higher in the new Member States than in the EU15 (over 20% higher on average, equivalent to some 9 working weeks) and this is as true in countries like the Czech Republic, where agriculture – where long working hours are the norm – accounts for a relatively small share of employment as in countries like Poland, where it still employs a large number of people.

They also remain much higher than in the US, which is widely known to have longer working hours than EU15 countries. According to the latest estimates, those employed in the US work around 8% more a year on average than in the EU15 – a somewhat smaller difference than has sometimes been portrayed (partly because paid hours in the US have been compared with actual hours worked in the EU), but still equivalent to over 4 working weeks a year.

## Weekly working hours

Average hours worked per week have also declined over the past decade in the EU (according to the LFS), but generally by less than annual hours, suggesting some increase in holidays (ie in the number of weeks worked a year). On average, weekly hours fell by 0.3% a year in the EU15 over the 10 years 1995-2005, equivalent to a reduction of just under 7 minutes a week, or just over an hour over the 10 years as a whole (Figure 2 – it should be noted that the change over time has been adjusted for breaks in the series). Again the fall was similar in the later years to the earlier ones and was widespread across countries, though the scale varied. It also occurred in most of the new Member States (and candidate countries) over the years for which data are available. The only countries in which average weekly hours failed to decline over this period were Belgium, Greece, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Poland and Romania, in all of which, they remained much the same. The fall was particularly pronounced in France and the Netherlands (0.7-0.8% a year – 14-18 minutes a week each year), where policy has focused on reducing working time as a means of increasing the number of people with jobs. There was also a fall of a similar size in Ireland and Portugal, partly reflecting the shift of employment out of agriculture.

2 Change in average weekly hours worked usually, 1995-2005



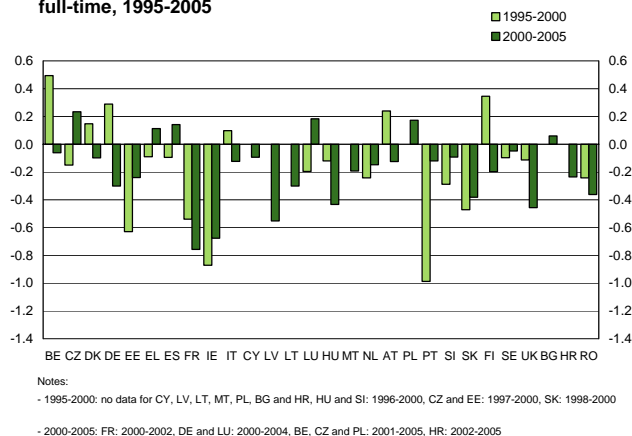
The reduction in hours was in most cases larger for women than for men – over the EU15 as a whole, around twice as large over the 10-year period – though, as emphasised below, this was largely due to the increased number of women working part-time.

In combination with the data on annual hours worked, these figures imply some reduction in the number of days worked on average over the year, or more holidays. For the EU15 as a whole, this amounted to around 4 days over the 10 years, or to just under half a day a year. The reduction, however, seems to have been less widely spread across the EU than the fall in weekly hours, with no apparent decline in a number of countries, including Denmark, France, Austria, Portugal, Hungary and Slovenia.

### Full-time hours and the effect of growth in part-time jobs

There is much less evidence of a general reduction in the hours worked by those employed full-time – ie by the great majority of people in employment (just over 81% in the EU as a whole). In the EU15 as a whole, there was no apparent decline over the 10 years 1995-2005 in the average weekly hours worked by those in full-time jobs (Figure 3). Moreover, this was much the same for women as for men.

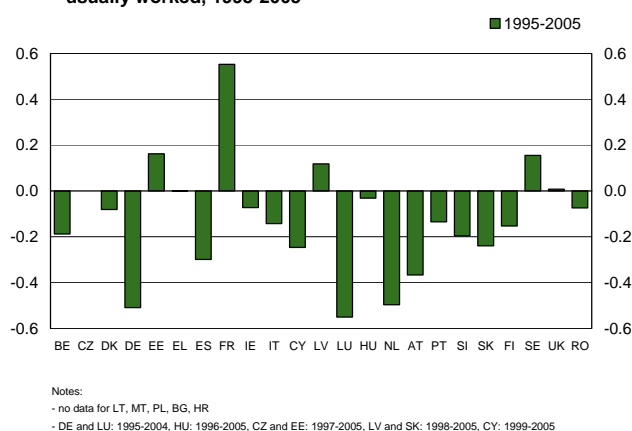
### 3 Change in average weekly hours worked by those employed full-time, 1995-2005



This was not the case in all EU15 countries. In France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal and the UK, average full-time hours declined by between 0.2% and 0.8% a year over the 10 years. In all the other countries, however, full-time hours remained much the same or increased slightly. On the other hand, there was some decline in most of the new Member States over the years for which data are available.

The fact that full-time hours have remained broadly unchanged in most EU15 countries implies that the decline in average weekly hours observed is primarily due to a growth of part-time working. This alone, therefore, reduced average hours by over 2% in the EU15 over the 10 years as a whole (0.2% a year) and by 4-5% in Germany, the Netherlands and Austria (Figure 4). It was, however, only a minor factor in the new Member States, where part-time working is much less important than in the EU15 (an average of only 8% of all those in work are employed in part-time jobs in the new Member States as compared with 20% in the EU15).

### 4 Effect of part-time work on change in average weekly hours usually worked, 1995-2005

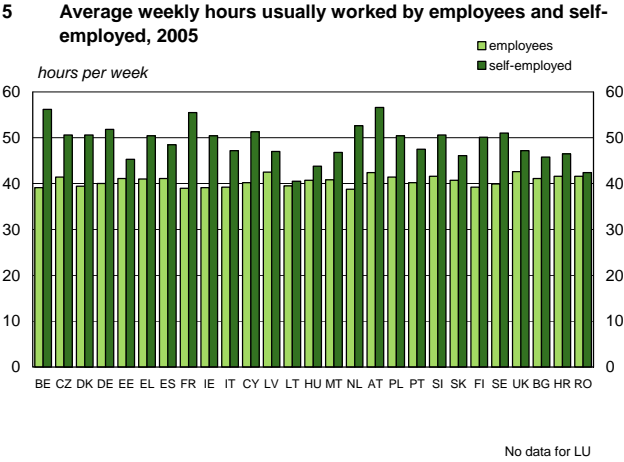


## Working time of employees and self-employed

In a number of countries, much of any decline in full-time hours which has occurred over recent years has been concentrated among the self-employed rather than among employees. This is the case in Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal and the UK, four of the five EU15 countries in which full-time hours declined between 1995 and 2005, in all of which the decline was much larger among the self-employed than among salaried workers, who experienced a reduction of just 0.2-0.3% a year over this period. It is also the case in most of the new Member States over the years for which there are data. In France, by contrast, the decline in hours was concentrated among employees, reflecting the introduction of the 35-hour week, and average hours worked by the self-employed increased slightly instead of falling. The self-employed seem, therefore, not to have been caught up in the general move in France to reduce working time.

Nevertheless, the widespread reduction in working time among the self-employed might suggest that where people have a more of a choice over the hours they work – employees often have very limited choice in this regard – they opt for working shorter hours. But this would be to ignore the fact that

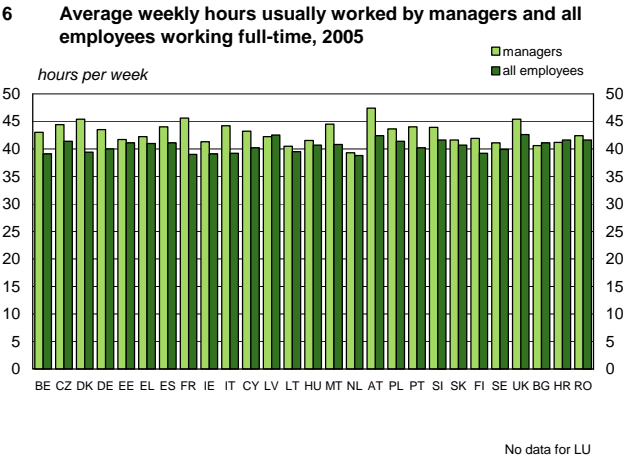
average hours worked by the self-employed remain substantially higher than among employees in most countries. The self-employed working full-time, therefore, tend to work an average of 9-10 hours more a week than employees in the EU and as much as 14 hours a week more in the Netherlands and Austria and 17 hours a week more in Belgium and France, in both of which the self-employed worked some 56 hours a week on average in 2005 (Figure 5).



**Working-time and income levels**

The fact that the self-employed, who in most cases not only have more discretion over their working time than employees but tend to have higher incomes, choose on average to work longer hours provides some insight into the relationship between hours worked and income. There is little sign, therefore, of the self-employed giving more priority than employees to leisure over the goods and services which working longer makes it possible to purchase. A similar conclusion can be drawn from the data on the relationship between hours worked and the jobs that people do, in the sense that working time tends to be greater among those employed in higher skilled occupations, which are generally also higher paid, than among those employed in low skilled ones.

Accordingly, employees in full-time jobs employed as managers in the EU25 worked an average just under 4 hours a week more than other employees in 2005 (Figure 6), with men in this position working slightly more hours than women (for men the average difference with other employees is 4 hours, for women 3 hours). The difference, moreover, was similar in almost all EU15 countries, though not in the new Member States. In all EU15 countries, except Greece and the Netherlands, therefore, average weekly hours were longer for managers than any other occupational group, the difference being particularly wide in Denmark and France (at 6 or more hours a week as compared with the average for all employees), both countries with income per head well above the EU average.



In addition, the average hours worked by managers have mostly increased over recent years in EU15 countries rather than fallen. In over half of the EU15 Member States, therefore, the average hours worked by managers in 2005 were more than 10 years previously, in each case, the increase being

greater than for full-time employees as a whole (the exceptions are Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Finland, Sweden and the UK).

By contrast, in all of the new Member States, apart from Poland (where data are available only from 2001) the average hours worked by managers declined over the years for which there are data (from 1997 or 1998), but in all cases by less than the decline for full-time employees as a whole.

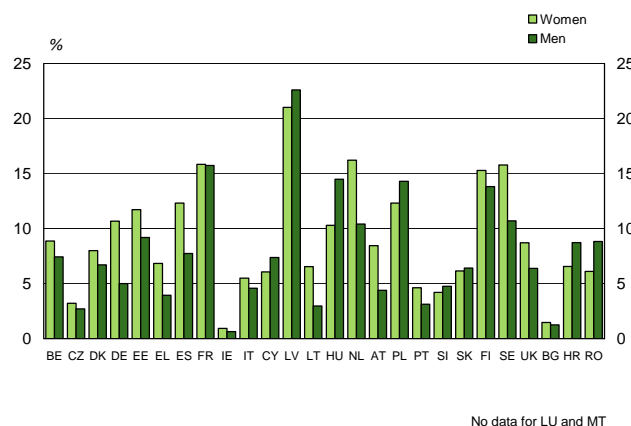
This evidence indicates little tendency for people to trade off income for leisure as their income rises – or at least suggests that there might be other factors at work to offset such a tendency. These might include, in particular, job satisfaction, which is likely to be greater for those with higher-skilled or more demanding jobs than those with lower skilled ones, or people’s desire to succeed in their professional careers, which might require them working relatively long hours. Alternatively, or additionally, the norm for the hours worked in particular jobs might well differ between them, so conditioning individual behaviour. Although it is difficult to identify the relative weight of these kinds of factor, there is little question that the time people spend in paid employment is affected by other considerations in addition to the income they earn from so doing and that the choice is not simply a matter of trading off the purchasing power which income brings against greater leisure time (the use of time freed up by working less is explored below).

### The desire for shorter working hours

Evidence from the Labour Force Survey suggests that there is limited desire on the part of employees to work fewer hours. When asked in the 2005 survey about the number of hours per week they would usually like to work, only just under 20% of employees giving an answer (22% of men and 17% of women) indicated that they would prefer to work less than at present. At the same time, some 12% stated that they would prefer to work longer hours. Moreover, only around 40% of those asked gave any answer at all, which suggests that for most people the issue is not so important.

Although the responses to the question vary across countries, in only one Member State – Latvia – did more than 20% of total employees (ie including those giving no answer as well as those doing so) expressed a wish to work fewer hours and in only 7 other Member States was the proportion over 10% (Figure 7). These include both countries with relatively low levels of income per head in which hours worked are typically relatively long (Hungary, Poland and Estonia as well as Latvia) and those with relatively high levels (France, the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden). The general conclusion, however, is that there does not seem to be a strong universal desire for shorter working hours across the EU, even in countries where income levels are well above average.

7 Proportion of employees wishing to work fewer hours, 2005



### Average hours worked by households

The above indicates that while average hours worked by those in employment have declined across Europe over recent years, in EU15 Member States in particular this is mainly because of an increase in the number of people – primarily women – working part-time. In these countries, the average hours worked by those of working age have tended to increase rather than decline as more women have entered the labour force and begun to pursue working careers. People generally, therefore, have not necessarily had more time to spend on other activities apart from paid employment. Although some

may have experienced a reduction in their working time, others, many of whom were not working at all before, have experienced an increase.

Accordingly, the main development in EU15 countries over the past few decades as regards working time is not so much a reduction in the number of hours worked in paid employment but a reallocation of these hours between individuals, particularly between men and women and, most especially, between men and women in the same household. The typical household of 30-40 years ago in most EU15 countries, in which there was one main bread-winner, invariably male, who went out to work to support the rest of the family, while the wife took care of the house and looked after the children, has been replaced by the dual-earner household, in which caring has become, in principle at least, a joint responsibility of the two (though how far this is the case in practice is examined below).

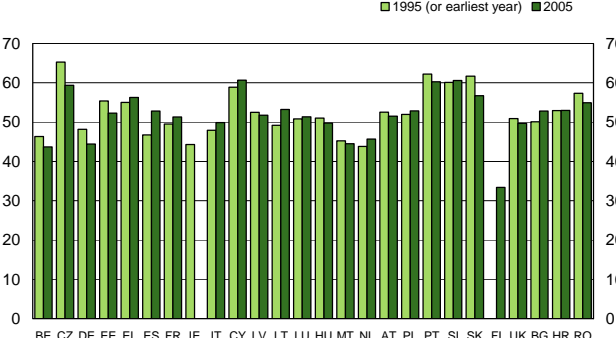
In the new Member States and candidate countries, on the other hand – though excluding Cyprus and Malta from this – the main development over the years since the transition began has been a reduction in the number of people in work, which has meant a decline in the proportion of both men and women of working age in paid employment, the relative extent of the decline varying between countries. In these countries, therefore, the average hours worked by those of working age has declined, though in most cases, this has occurred because of a lack of jobs rather than because of a deliberate choice.

The concern here is, first, to document the changes which have occurred in the average hours worked by households in recent years in both the new Member States and in other parts of the EU and, secondly, to examine the change in the division of these hours between those in the household in the two groups of countries.

**Changes in average hours worked by households**

There has been a universal trend across Europe over recent years for the average size of households to decline and the proportion of people living on their own to increase. This partly reflects the ageing of the population and the growing numbers living to an advanced age as widows or widowers. But it is also the case for population of working age. Focusing on those aged 25-54<sup>2</sup>, the proportion living alone has risen over the past 10-20 years in all EU countries for which data are available from the LFS. In the EU15 countries, this ranged from an increase between 1995 and 2005 of around 3 percentage points in France, Luxembourg and Portugal to one of almost 10 percentage points in Belgium and Spain. In most cases, this followed an increase in the proportion over the preceding 10 years. A similar tendency is evident in the new Member States over the years for which there are data.

**8 Average weekly hours worked by households, 1995 (or earliest year) and 2005**



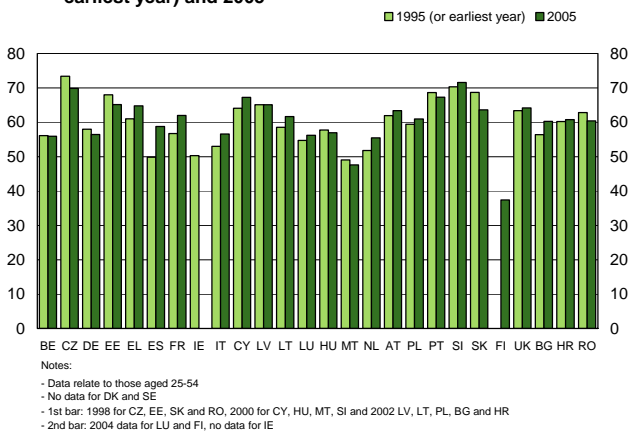
Notes:  
 - Data relate to those aged 25-54  
 - No data for DK and SE  
 - 1st bar: 1998 for CZ, EE, SK and RQ, 2000 for CY, HU, MT, SI and 2002 for LV, LT, PL, BG and HR  
 - 2nd bar: 2004 data for LU and FI, no data for IE

Despite this shift towards people living alone, average hours worked per week by the households in which people of this age group live increased over the 10 years 1995-2005 in 6 of the 11 EU15 countries for which data are available (Figure 8). (The missing countries are Denmark, Ireland, Finland

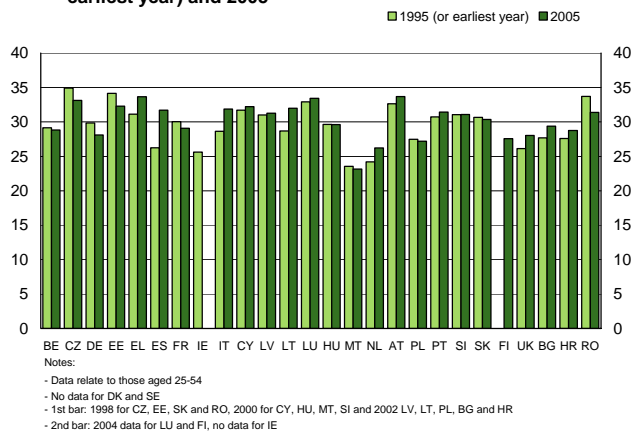
<sup>2</sup> This, therefore, excludes the younger and older age groups for whom both employment rates and working time are affected by special factors – in particular, the combination of employment and education in the case of those people and the transition to retirement in the case of those older.

and Sweden, for all of which there are no data by household for this period.) The six countries concerned are three of the four southern countries, Greece, Spain and Italy, together with France, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. In most of these countries, the average hours worked by those living as a couple increased significantly (the exception is Luxembourg where there was a relatively small rise of just under 2%), reflecting mainly the growth in the number of women in paid work, though also a decline in unemployment among men. An increase in the average hours worked by couple households, however, is also evident in two of the 5 countries in which average household hours fell, Austria and the UK, while they remained broadly unchanged in Belgium. This leaves only Germany and Portugal showing a decline in the average hours worked per week by couple households over these 10 years and in both of these, the reduction was under 2%. (Figure 9)

9 Average weekly hours worked by couple households, 1995 (or earliest year) and 2005



10 Average weekly hours worked by single households, 1995 (or earliest year) and 2005



In 8 of the 11 EU15 countries for which there are data, the average hours worked by those in this age group living alone also increased over these 10 years, reflecting a decline in unemployment, the only countries in which they fell being Belgium, France and Germany, in each of which unemployment either declined relatively little (Belgium and France) or went up (Germany). In general in the EU15, therefore, the average hours spent in paid employment by those living in either single or couple households have risen over the past decade and in the majority of cases, also rose over the preceding 10 years. (Figure 10)

In the new Member States, the tendency has been very different. The average hours worked per week by those living in couple households has declined in 5 of the 7 countries for which data are available for 5 years or more (the three missing countries are Poland, Latvia and Lithuania), the only two exceptions being Cyprus and Slovenia. Similarly, the average hours worked by those living alone has also fallen in four of these five countries, the average remaining much the same in Hungary as well as Slovenia and Cyprus.

### The division of hours worked within households

The main change in couple households EU15 countries in recent years has been not so much in the total hours worked but in the division of paid work between men and women, largely as a consequence of more women being in paid employment. In 1985, under half the women aged 25-54 in couple households in 7 of the 9 Member States for which data are available were in paid employment. Only in France and the UK, was the proportion over half (around 60% in both cases) and in Greece, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, it was around 40% or less. (No data are available for the three Nordic countries where the employment rate of women was much higher than in the rest of the EU at this time.) Moreover, in Spain in 1990, the proportion was only just over 30%. (Table 1)

Table 1. Division of hours worked by men and women in couple households (aged 25-54), 1985 (or earliest year available) and 2005

1985 or earliest year available																			%							
Sex	Hours worked	BE	CZ	DE	EE	EL	ES	FR	IE	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SK	UK	BG	HR	RO
Men	not working	8.9	6.5	5.5	11.3	7.7	9.6	7.8	20.2	4.3	5.4	17.3	17.2	4.3	19.9	8.5	10.5	7.3	22.6	6.2	10.5	11.8	10.4	28.3	18.5	13.5
	< 15 hours	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.6	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.5	0.2	0.6	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.0
	part-time	3.3	0.5	0.6	2.3	2.1	0.4	2.5	1.6	2.0	1.6	2.0	6.2	1.0	0.7	1.1	3.2	0.8	2.2	1.4	1.5	0.5	0.7	1.0	1.5	0.8
	long part-time	1.0	0.6	0.3	1.5	2.5	1.3	1.0	1.5	0.9	1.0	2.1	1.7	0.4	0.7	1.8	1.1	0.5	1.3	0.8	0.3	0.5	1.2	0.4	0.5	1.9
	full time	67.9	25.8	72.7	56.1	43.2	65.4	62.0	48.7	63.4	61.0	44.6	66.0	82.4	56.2	62.0	61.1	76.1	34.1	32.1	64.2	25.5	29.9	55.6	45.6	69.1
	> 40 hours	18.8	66.5	20.6	28.3	44.3	23.2	26.1	27.9	28.9	30.7	33.4	8.6	11.9	22.4	26.6	23.5	15.0	39.5	59.3	23.1	61.6	57.6	14.7	33.7	14.8
Women	not working	52.6	24.1	50.3	24.7	58.8	68.6	41.7	77.2	60.8	38.0	27.3	24.2	66.3	34.9	73.8	64.2	31.7	35.7	37.3	16.3	26.0	39.8	32.5	35.6	27.9
	< 15 hours	2.2	0.4	3.7	1.5	0.6	1.3	2.7	1.7	0.8	0.9	0.6	0.7	2.3	0.1	0.2	10.5	3.4	0.9	1.4	0.2	0.1	11.8	0.1	0.6	0.0
	part-time	12.0	2.8	16.1	5.1	4.1	2.9	10.1	5.4	6.5	6.7	7.2	10.0	8.9	2.7	5.9	13.2	16.0	8.0	6.2	1.9	2.2	19.7	1.6	2.4	2.0
	long part-time	2.5	3.3	3.2	3.0	3.5	2.3	3.8	1.9	2.5	2.9	2.2	4.1	2.3	2.1	3.4	2.8	4.1	3.1	2.1	0.6	1.8	4.6	1.2	1.1	2.3
	full time	24.5	24.6	21.3	55.3	15.9	19.8	33.6	11.4	23.6	43.6	45.2	56.2	17.1	50.5	15.0	7.3	38.4	31.3	23.6	67.5	22.4	16.3	55.2	41.5	58.4
	> 40 hours	6.1	44.8	5.4	10.5	17.1	5.0	8.1	2.4	5.9	7.9	17.5	4.7	3.3	9.8	1.7	2.1	6.4	21.1	29.4	13.5	47.5	7.8	9.3	18.9	9.5

2005																			%							
Sex	Hours worked	BE	CZ	DE	EE	EL	ES	FR	IE	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SK	UK	BG	HR	RO
Men	not working	9.4	7.0	10.8	12.0	6.0	8.3	9.4	7.6	4.9	17.3	17.2	4.2	18.0	9.5	6.4	9.9	22.6	7.8	9.9	13.8	8.1	28.3	18.5	17.2	
	< 15 hours	0.4	0.1	1.1	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.9	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.5	0.1	0.2	0.1	
	part-time	3.4	0.5	2.2	1.6	2.3	1.3	2.6	2.7	0.9	2.0	6.2	1.1	0.9	1.8	3.6	1.4	2.2	1.3	1.5	0.5	2.8	1.0	1.5	0.9	
	long part-time	3.1	0.5	1.4	0.2	3.3	1.4	2.3	1.6	1.5	2.1	1.7	0.5	0.7	2.2	6.1	1.0	1.3	0.9	0.3	0.5	1.8	0.4	0.5	1.7	
	full time	63.6	59.3	61.2	69.8	46.8	57.8	54.2	57.0	60.6	44.6	66.0	86.7	67.7	61.9	71.6	47.6	34.1	65.3	64.5	64.3	33.1	55.6	45.6	61.0	
	> 40 hours	20.1	32.7	23.2	16.5	41.4	30.9	31.2	30.7	31.9	33.4	8.6	7.5	12.6	24.6	11.5	39.6	39.5	24.5	23.6	20.9	53.6	14.7	33.7	19.2	
Women	not working	28.4	27.0	30.3	23.8	42.6	41.5	27.0	43.8	29.8	27.3	24.2	34.4	35.8	71.5	22.8	25.5	35.7	23.6	15.1	29.9	22.7	32.5	35.6	33.0	
	< 15 hours	3.2	0.4	12.3	1.0	0.6	3.0	2.9	1.9	1.4	0.6	0.7	3.9	0.2	1.3	13.4	6.0	0.9	1.5	0.4	0.1	7.5	0.1	0.6	0.0	
	part-time	23.6	2.9	20.8	5.5	6.3	10.7	14.6	16.4	7.5	7.2	10.0	21.7	2.6	6.8	36.6	21.9	8.0	5.8	3.0	2.0	23.7	1.6	2.4	2.2	
	long part-time	11.7	2.9	6.3	1.3	5.2	4.5	8.8	4.6	4.1	2.2	4.1	5.4	1.9	4.2	11.1	8.7	3.1	2.8	0.9	1.7	7.1	1.2	1.1	1.5	
	full time	26.6	58.1	25.5	62.2	29.7	32.4	37.2	27.1	49.4	45.2	56.2	32.4	55.2	14.2	15.0	26.6	31.3	56.0	68.3	59.0	24.3	55.2	41.5	53.0	
	> 40 hours	6.4	8.6	4.8	6.2	15.6	7.9	9.5	6.2	7.9	17.5	4.7	2.1	4.3	2.0	1.2	11.2	21.1	10.2	12.3	7.3	14.7	9.3	18.9	10.3	

Notes:

- no data for DK, FI and SE / no data for IE in 2005

- earliest year available: ES and PT: 1990, AT: 1995, CZ, EE, SK and RO: 1998, CY, HU, MT and SI: 2000, LV, LT, PL, BG and HR: 2002

Since then, the relative number of women in this age group in paid employment and living in couple households has risen markedly in all of these countries. In France, where it was already higher than in the other Member States, it increased by 15 percentage points in the 20 years up to 2005, and in the UK, by 17 percentage points. This was also the scale of the increase in Italy, where it had been well below average, while in Greece, it was only slightly smaller. In the other Member States, the increase was even larger – 20 percentage points in Germany, 24 percentage points in Belgium and around 30 percentage points in Luxembourg and the Netherlands, while in Spain, it was some 27 percentage points in the 15 years from 1990 to 2005 (in Portugal, it went up by 14 points over this period).

At the same time, many of the women who have entered paid employment in the EU15 over this period have done so on a part-time rather than a full-time basis, especially over the past 10 years. Nearly all of the increase in employment of women from couple households was, therefore, in part-time jobs between 1995 and 2005 in Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands, while in Germany and Austria, the proportion in full-time jobs went down while that in part-time ones rose by much more. In France and Luxembourg, the proportion of women in couple households in part-time jobs also increased by more than that in full-time ones. On the other hand, in Greece and Spain as well as the UK, the proportion of women in full-time jobs rose by significantly more than those in part-time ones and in Portugal, the proportion of women in part-time jobs declined as the proportion in full-time employment went up significantly.

Nevertheless, although many women entering employment may have gone into part-time jobs over the past 10-20 years, the proportion of men aged 25-54 in paid employment declined in most EU15 countries over this period or remained much the same. Only in the Netherlands did it increase by more than 2 percentage points between 1985 and 2005. The shift in the division of paid employment in couple households from men to women has, therefore, been considerable throughout the EU15 – or at least in the countries for which data are available (in the three Nordic countries, where the proportion of women in work was already relatively high, the shift is accordingly likely to have been less than elsewhere).

This shift in the division of paid work, moreover, has occurred in couple households with children as well as those without. Indeed, there seems to have been little difference in the extent of the change in the two types of household, though in many countries, the increase in employment of women with children has been particularly associated with a growth of part-time working.

In the new Member States, developments over recent years have been very different. As noted above, the proportion of both men and women of working age in paid employment declined in all the countries concerned immediately following the start of the transition process and there has been little significant growth in employment since then. The relative number of women aged 25-54 in paid work and living in couple households, therefore, declined (by 3-4 percentage points) in the Czech Republic and Slovakia between 1998 and 2005 (the period for which LFS data are available) and, though it increased in Estonia, the rise was relatively small (1 percentage point). It also declined slightly in Hungary between

2000 and 2005 and rose by a similar amount in Slovenia (by around 1 percentage point in both cases). There were more significant increases, however, in Malta and, most especially in Cyprus, while there was a significant fall in Romania (of just under 4 percentage points). On the other hand, there is no sign of any shift towards part-time working in these countries, except to a small extent in Slovenia.

At the same time, however, the proportion of men in employment in this age group in couple households has also declined over recent years, the only countries showing any increase over the period for which LFS data are available being Hungary and Slovenia (though there was also a small increase in Estonia between 2000 and 2005). The division of paid work between men and women in couple households, therefore, seems not to be changing much in the new Member States on the European mainland after the shift which the collapse of the previous regime brought about.

### **The division of time between working and not working**

Data on hours worked give only a partial insight into both the way that men and women divide their time between different activities and developments in this over the years. In particular, such data indicate only the amount of time men and women spend in paid employment and reveal nothing about how they use the time when they are not working. Although it might be convenient to assume that the time not spent in paid employment is spent pursuing leisure activities and, therefore, that changes in hours worked reflect the trade off between work and leisure, such a simplification is far from the reality and cannot be justified in practice.

Accordingly, men and women have other constraints on their time in addition to the need to work in order to support themselves and their families and to achieve an acceptable standard of living. In particular, they many need to take care of their children or look after other family members in need of care. Increasing attention has, therefore, been focused both by policy-makers and researchers on the way that men and women divide their time between these constraints and, especially, on how they balance paid employment against their caring responsibilities as well as on how they use the time not spent in paid work. Such questions have been addressed primarily through surveys, particularly, through surveys of time use which involve people keeping a detailed record of how they spend their time during selected 24-hour days which are intended to be broadly representative of the way they spend their time generally.

Studies based on the data collected by such surveys indicate that in addition to paid work by those in employment declining, unpaid work by women in particular has also tended to decline (see for example Gronmo and Lingsom 1986, Gershuny 2000). Men, on the other hand, seem to have increased the time they spend doing unpaid work, including, along with women, devoting more time to caring for children (Sullivan and Gershuny 2001). They indicate, in addition, significant difference in the time spent on various activities between countries across Europe (Eurostat 2003, Statistics in Focus).

### **Variations in the division of time across EU countries**

The data collected through time use surveys organised by Eurostat in a number of EU Member States over the recent past give an insight into the differences in the division of time which exist both between countries and between men and women with and without children. The interest here is not just in these national variations, which reflect in some degree differences in social norms and in the underlying institutional structure – in terms for example of support arrangements – but in particular in the effect of income and other common factors on people's use of their time, in how far those on low incomes are disadvantaged in this respect and in the extent to which the way they divide their time contributes to their social exclusion.

Examination of these and similar issues, however, is constrained at present. So far, the time use survey data compiled by Eurostat have not been divided by the income of respondents (or more specifically by the income group to which they belong). Moreover, for nearly all EU countries, time series data are not available to indicate how the use of time changes over the years as income increases and as other developments, such as technological advances (leading to the development of time-saving domestic appliances and of the internet, for example), alter the constraints on how people spend their time as well as widening the options open to them.

Nevertheless, some indication can be gained of the potential effect of income on time use by dividing the countries for which data are available into 3 groups according to their median levels of household income. Although the results of such an exercise need to be treated with caution since there are other

differences between the countries concerned apart from average income, they are illuminating. In particular, they suggest that income levels do affect the way that people divide their time, especially as regards women who in countries with higher income tend to spend less time working, in both paid and unpaid activities, and more time doing other things, though not exclusively pursuing leisure interests.

Time survey data have been compiled by Eurostat on a reasonably comparable basis for 14 EU Member States for a date in 2001 or 2002. The countries concerned include a fairly representative cross-section of Member States (6 of the entrants into the EU in 2004, two southern countries and 6 northern Member States). Although a full set of data are not available for all of these countries, it is possible to examine, first, how men and women in different age groups spend their time in each of the 14 countries, the focus here being on those in the age group 25-44, and, secondly, for a subset of 9 countries, how this is affected by having children.

Taking men and women in this age group both with and without children first, the broad effect of income on time use can be examined by comparing the way that men and women, on average, in the 5 countries with the highest household income levels (the UK, Germany, Belgium, France and Sweden) divide a typical day with the way that those in the 5 countries with the lowest incomes (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland and Hungary) do so. (The median income in the former countries averages around 3½ times more in purchasing parity terms than that in the latter ones and even the country with the lowest median income in the former group – Sweden – has a level which is over twice as high as that in the country with the highest income in the latter group – Hungary.)

In the higher income group of countries, men, on average, spend slightly less of their time doing paid work than in the lower income group, but the difference is relatively small (just under 21% of their time as opposed to almost 22%, equivalent to 18 minutes a day or 1½ hours a week). Women also spend less time in paid work in the former countries, but the difference is much larger, averaging around 45 minutes a day or almost 4 hours a week. Women in these countries, in addition, spend less time in unpaid work – in housekeeping, shopping and so on – around 22 minutes a day on average, meaning that overall, work of all kinds takes up over an hour less a day in higher income countries than lower income ones. Men, by contrast, spend marginally more time in higher income countries doing unpaid work, so that overall, while work absorbs less of their day than in lower income countries, the difference is much smaller than for women (only around a quarter as large – Table 2). This apparent shift between paid and unpaid work is also apparent in the US, where time use survey data does exist for a span of years and where the time spent by women on unpaid activities has declined as their time in paid work has risen, while the reverse shift is evident for men (Fisher, Egerton, Gershuny and Robinson 2006)

Table 2. Division of time of men and women aged 25-44 between activities in groups of Member States, 2001-2002

*% of typical day*

Activities	Sex	% of typical day			Difference in minutes between Bottom 5 and Top 5
		Bottom 5	Middle 4	Top 5	
paid work	Women	15.6	13.4	12.4	-45
	Men	21.7	22.2	20.5	-18
unpaid work	Women	20.1	20.2	18.7	-21
	Men	9.9	8.1	10.0	0
total work	Women	35.7	33.6	31.1	-66
	Men	31.7	30.3	30.4	-18
sleep	Women	34.9	34.5	35.0	2
	Men	34.6	34.1	34.0	-8
eating and personal care	Women	9.3	9.8	10.4	15
	Men	9.5	9.8	9.9	5
travel for leisure	Women	1.2	:	2.0	10
	Men	1.5	:	2.2	10
other travel	Women	3.5	5.5	4.2	9
	Men	4.0	5.9	4.3	4
leisure	Women	14.5	15.4	16.5	29
	Men	18.4	18.8	18.4	0
of which socialising	Women	2.6	3.6	4.0	20
	Men	2.7	3.9	3.5	12
watching TV and video	Women	8.1	0.0	7.6	-12
	Men	9.8	0.0	10.1	-28

Notes:

- These data are based on the Time Use Survey
- 'Bottom 5' includes LV, LT, EE, PL and HU
- 'Middle 4' includes SI, ES, IT and FI
- 'Top 5' includes SE, FR, BE, DE and UK (note that Top 5 for travel includes only 3 of the countries because no split is available for FR and BE)

Nevertheless, it is still the case even in higher income countries that women spend more time working, taking paid and unpaid work together, than men, though the difference is small (only 10 minutes a day on average), whereas in low income countries, it is substantial (almost an hour a day).

This additional time spent not working, however, is only partly reflected in more time being spent on leisure activities. Indeed, for men, there is virtually no difference in the amount of leisure time between the two groups of country, while for women, under half the time freed up by working less in the higher countries goes on leisure activities – some 29 minutes a day more on average.

For both men and women, therefore, the reduction in working time which higher income seems to make possible mostly leads to more time being spent on personal care, eating and travelling – more on the first two especially in the case of women, more on travelling than eating and personal care in the case of men. Moreover, in both cases, the extra time spent on travel consists not of travel for leisure but travel to and from work, for shopping and transporting children.

The use of leisure time in the two groups of countries is also instructive. In the higher income countries, both men and women tend to spend more of their time on social activities than in the lower income ones (some 20 minutes a day on average in the case of women, 12 minutes a day in the case of men). In the lower income countries, by contrast, more time is spent watching TV, especially in the case of men (around 28 minutes more a day). Indeed, in both groups of country, men spend significantly more time watching TV than women (some 35 minutes more a day in the lower income group). Watching TV, therefore, is an activity which costs relatively little as opposed to socialising, and usually involves no extra cost as the time spent watching increases, so that it is perhaps only to be expected that it tends to be a more popular pastime the lower the level of income (though less so in southern countries than elsewhere).

### ***3. Policy conclusions***

How men and women choose to spend their time is predominantly a personal matter, but their choice is constrained by a number of factors which public policy can potentially influence, and since their choice can have wider repercussions on the economy and on society, it is legitimate for policy-makers at both national and EU level to take an interest in this. The evidence presented here suggests that while the average time spent in paid work by those in employment has tended to decline over the years, in the EU15 countries at least, the proportion of people of working age in employment, especially women, has increased. Paid work has, therefore, become more evenly spread across society over time and, in particular, more evenly divided within households, especially between men and women.

As a consequence, increasing numbers of people, but again especially women, have had to balance the pursuit of a working career against their other interests and responsibilities, particularly, the need to care for their children. The support and care facilities which are available to parents – as well as to others who have to look after family members in need of care – either free of charge or at an affordable price clearly affect the ease or difficulty of doing this. This is an issue which is examined in the policy brief on the cost of children so it is not considered here.

More generally, although the evidence does not suggest much falling off in the desire for higher income levels as income increases, it is nevertheless the case that there are constraints on the ability of people to work less and to trade off the income which working longer hours brings against being able to spend more time not working, whether pursuing leisure activities or other interests, including unpaid work, broadly defined. These constraints can be artificial, in the form of the regulations, or lack of regulations, in place governing working hours or governing entitlement to social benefits and social protection more generally.

A number of EU Member States (including Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Lithuania and Poland) have, therefore, introduced legislation in recent years to make it more possible for people to work part-time, by giving employees a right to request a part-time job instead of a full-time one and, in the Netherlands, to adjust their working hours so long as it does not have a detrimental effect on the business in which they are employed. Moreover, in a number of cases, there have been changes in social security arrangements to ensure that part-time and full-time employees are treated alike.

While there are now few Member States in which those working part-time are disadvantaged in terms of their entitlement to social protection, even if the amount they receive might be affected by the hours they work, it remains the case that availability of part-time jobs is limited in many countries, especially in the new Member States and southern countries. This may, in part, reflect the demand for part-time work in these countries, but it also reflects business regulations which, for example, restrict the hours which companies can trade.

In addition, it is still the case that the ability of individuals to determine the hours they work and when they work those hours is still severely limited in most parts of the EU<sup>3</sup>. It is primarily a matter for employers to introduce more flexible working arrangements to enable people better to balance the time they spend working against their other interests and responsibilities. Governments, however, can take the lead not only in the arrangements they make for their own work force but also in raising awareness of the issue and the possible advantages to employers of a more contented, and therefore, productive, work force.

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<sup>3</sup> According to data from the special *ad hoc* module on working arrangements included with the EU Labour Force Survey in 2004, in most EU Member States, the great majority of employees, both men and women, have fixed working hours and no discretion to adjust these either over the working day or over the working year. In 16 of the 20 Member States covered (those missing from the EU25 were the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden), two-thirds or more of employees had fixed working hours and only in four countries – Denmark, Germany, Austria and Finland – did they have some ability to adjust their working time.